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Let's restore order

The affairs of Sullivan County government appear to be in shambles, and those elected — in this case the county commissioners — and hired to run it are not to blame.

The county missed Friday's deadline for adopting a budget because the delegation's finance committee did not complete its work on time. An emergency resolution enabling the county to pay its bills was approved, but only after the self-appointed county gatekeeper, delegation chairman Peter Franklin, D-Newport, had it reviewed by the county attorney. Friday was another in a series of meetings characterized by someone storming out.

The finance committee has quibbled over small allocations while taking no action on the budget and can't even get a quorum to approve a spending plan.

You could say there is enough blame to go around but the sorry state of affairs is mostly the doings of Franklin. He should have the finger pointed at him for failing to bring things under control but only because he is why they are spiraling out of control.

His stubbornness and heavy-handed, nearly dictatorial, style has made a bad situation worse. How ironic that Franklin is practicing the same tactics that he frequently accused the hierarchy of the New Hampshire-Vermont Solid Waste Project of engaging in. That is, ignoring everyone who doesn't agree with him and making up the rules as he goes along.

At the convention last Friday, Franklin refused to accept motions made by members. When a motion to require written approval to make budget transfers between county departments failed, Franklin appointed his own committee. His actions appalled those who are even vaguely familiar with Robert's Rules of Order.

Franklin may have a point in saying that voters were seeking an overhaul in county government when they swept Democrats into power last year. But we don't for a second think they anticipated — much less favored — this mess.

It's time to restore order in county government and Franklin is in a position to get things started. If all else fails, the county should adopt the commissioners' proposed budget and begin right now to work on next year's budget.

Calmer heads should prevail as the county deals with the many outstanding issues it faces — issues such as the new county jail, the residential care facility, the problems at the county nursing home.

Franklin needs to begin acting like a chairman and recognizing and accepting the will of the majority of delegates. Barring that, the delegation should take action and remove him.